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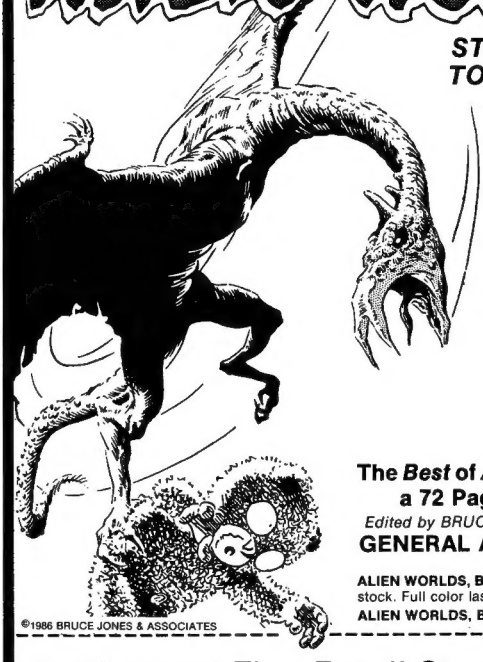

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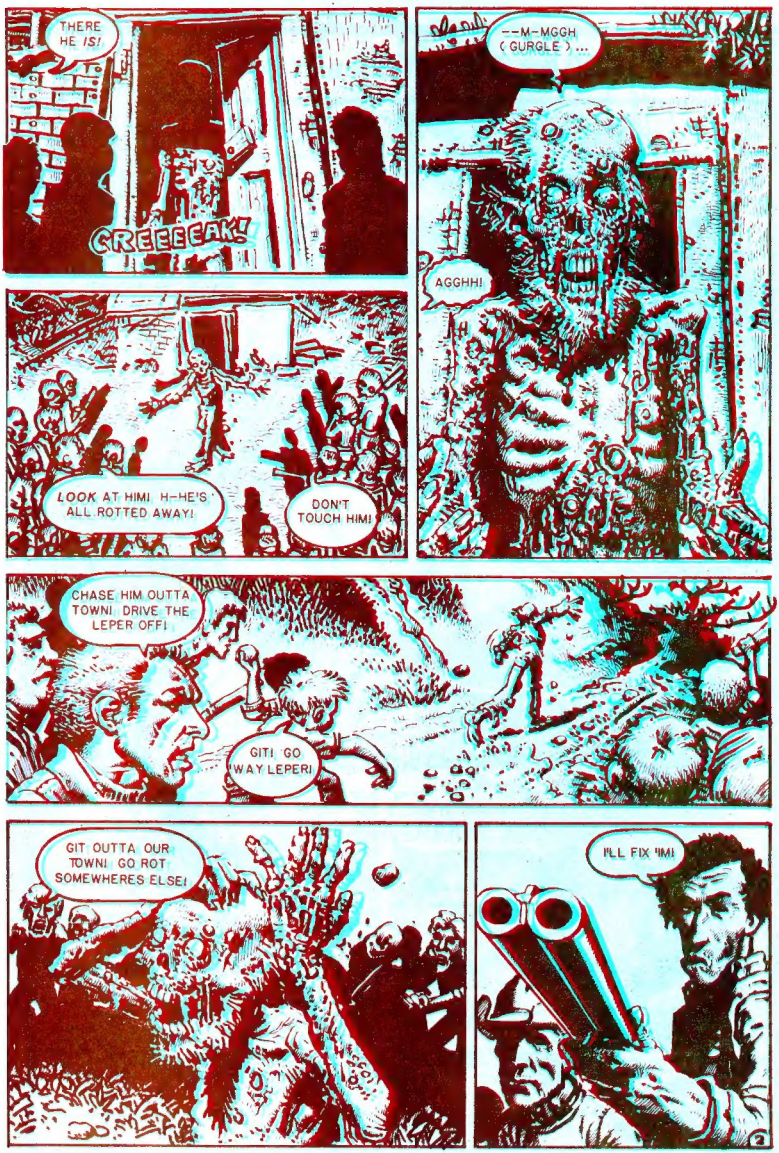
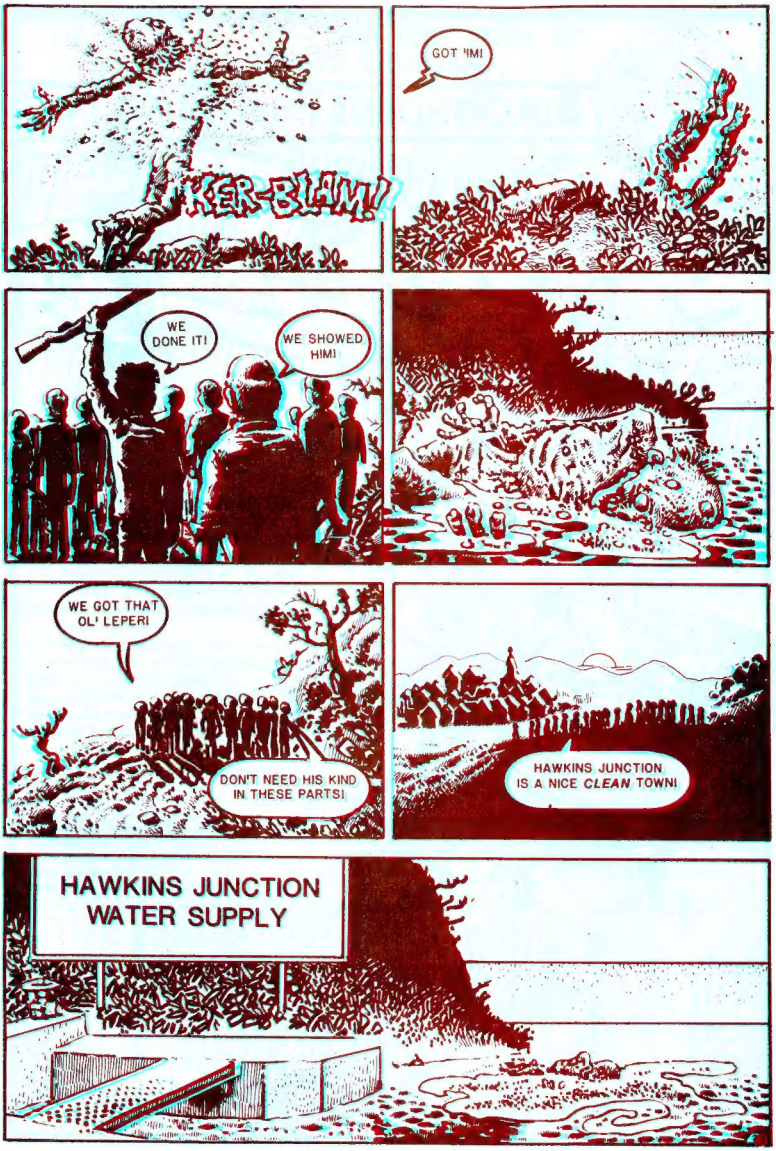

THERE HE IS!
GREEEEAK!
--M-MGGH (GURGLE)...
AGGHH!
LOOK AT HIM! H-HE'S ALL ROTTED AWAY!
DON'T TOUCH HIM!
CHASE HIM OUTTA TOWN! DRIVE THE LEPER OFF!
GIT! GO WAY LEPER!
GIT OUTTA OUR TOWN! GO ROT SOMEWHERES ELSE!
I'LL FIX 'IM!


KER-BLAM!
GOT 'IM!
WE DONE IT!
WE SHOWED HIM!
WE GOT THAT OL' LEPER!
DON'T NEED HIS KIND IN THESE PARTS!
HAWKINS JUNCTION IS A NICE *CLEAN* TOWN!
HAWKINS JUNCTION WATER SUPPLY

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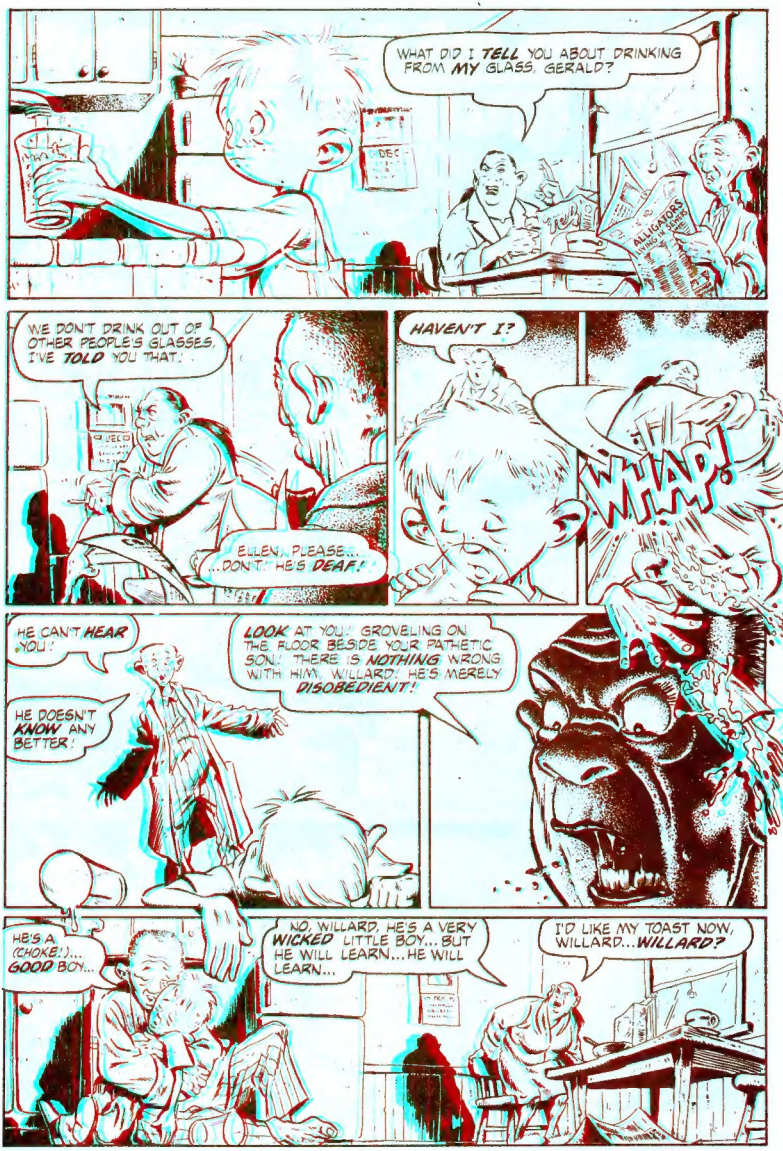
WAY DOWN THERE BELOW IN THE DARK
SEG LIVED IN THE SEWER. HE HAD LIVED THERE ALL THE YEARS OF HIS LIFE. HOWEVER LONG THAT WAS. SEG DID NOT KNOW. HE COULD NOT COUNT. HE COULD NOT SPEAK. HE COULD NOT REALLY THINK, IN THE ORDINARY SENSE OF THE WORD.
PLOP
HE WAS ALONE AND BLIND AND THE ONLY ONE OF HIS SPECIES. WHATEVER THAT SPECIES WAS...HE EXISTED IN THE SEWER. THAT WAS ALL.
SEG ATE GARBAGE. THERE WAS RARELY AN ABSENCE OF IT. SOMETIMES, WHEN HE WAS LUCKY, OR WHEN HE HAPPENED ON A SICK ONE, HE ATE RATS. HE ATE THEM RAW AND SOMETIMES HALF-ALIVE. MOSTLY HE SLEPT.
enriquez
HE WAS CONTENT. ENOUGH.
SLEEPING OCCUPIED SEVENTY PER CENT OF HIS LIFE. FORAGING THE OTHER THIRTY. HE HAD NO ENEMIES. THE SEWER WAS VERY OLD AND VERY DEEP AND HE KNEW ALL THE PLACES TO HIDE, IF THERE HAD BEEN ENEMIES. BUT THERE WERE NONE.
GERALD?...
SLOSH
SLOOSH
LIFE WAS A CEMENT WOMB...

Story by **BRUCE JONES** Art by **TOM ENRIQUEZ** 3-D Effects by **FRITSCH**


WHAT DID I TELL YOU ABOUT DRINKING FROM MY GLASS, GERALD?
ALLIGATORS
WE DON'T DRINK OUT OF OTHER PEOPLE'S GLASSES, I'VE TOLD YOU THAT.
ELLEN, PLEASE... ...DON'T. HE'S DEAF!
HAVEN'T I?
WHAP!
HE CAN'T HEAR YOU!
HE DOESN'T KNOW ANY BETTER!
LOOK AT YOU! GROVELING ON THE FLOOR BESIDE YOUR PATHETIC SON! THERE IS NOTHING WRONG WITH HIM, WILLARD! HE'S MERELY DISOBEDIENT!
HE'S A (CHOKE!)... GOOD BOY...
NO, WILLARD, HE'S A VERY WICKED LITTLE BOY... BUT HE WILL LEARN... HE WILL LEARN...
I'D LIKE MY TOAST NOW, WILLARD... WILLARD?

THOUGH TOTALLY BLIND SINCE BIRTH--WHENEVER **THAT** WAS--SEG'S SENSE OF **HEARING** WAS **ACUTE.** HE COULD DISCERN THE MINUTE SOUNDS OF A ROACH WALKING ALONG THE CAVERN CEILING.

HE COULD HEAR THE FAR AWAY NOISE OF A CAB'S TIRES MAKING A CRISP HUMMING SOUND ON THE PAVEMENT FAR ABOVE HIS HEAD...

IT WAS THIS **SUPERNORMAL** ABILITY TO HEAR THAT ALLOWED SEG TO SURVIVE DOWN HERE IN THE DARKNESS AND SLIME. NO SOUND ESCAPED THOSE INCREDIBLE EARS...WHETHER THAT OF APPROACHING FOOD OR--**APPROACHING DANGER!**

SSSSSSSSSSSSS

THERE WERE **ALLIGATORS** IN SEG'S HOME--NOT MANY, BUT ENOUGH TO KEEP HIM VIGILANT. THEY WERE THE DISCARDED PRODUCT OF IMPATIENT YOUNG BOYS, REJECTED BIRTHDAY PRESENTS FLUSHED DOWN CONVENIENT TOILETS...

...HERE IN SEG'S WORLD THEY **GREW!**

SEG HAD KILLED PERHAPS A HALF DOZEN OF THEM. ALWAYS, INEVITABLY, THEY TOOK A LITTLE OF HIS STRANGE, MEMBRANEOUS SELF **WITH** THEM...SEG DIDN'T MIND...

PANT...PANT

WITHIN TWO TO SIX DAYS, AN **EXTRAORDINARY** THING HAPPENED TO SEG'S DENUDED TISSUE...

...IT **ALWAYS** GREW BACK...

SLURP

MUNCH MUNCH

GNASH

GNASH

SLURRRP

WHEN HE WASN'T SLEEPING OR EATING, SEG SOMETIMES LIKED TO PLAY A ***GAME***. IT WAS HIS VERY ***OWN*** GAME AND HE HAD INVENTED IT ALL BY HIMSELF. FIRST HE WOULD JUST SIT VERY QUIETLY IN A CORNER... THEN HE WOULD WAIT FOR SOME CREATURE TO HAPPEN BY: MAYBE A ROACH, MAYBE A WATERBUG,

...OR A RAT.

WHEN HE HEARD THE CREATURE COMING, SEG WOULD ***CONCENTRATE*** ON IT WITH ALL HIS MIGHT, JAMMING SHUT HIS HUGE EYES AND GIVING IT ALL HIS ATTENTION...

AND IF HE WORKED AT IT ***HARD*** ENOUGH, A STRANGE THING WOULD HAPPEN... HE WOULD SOMEHOW ***DISSOLVE*** INTO THE CREATURES BRAIN...

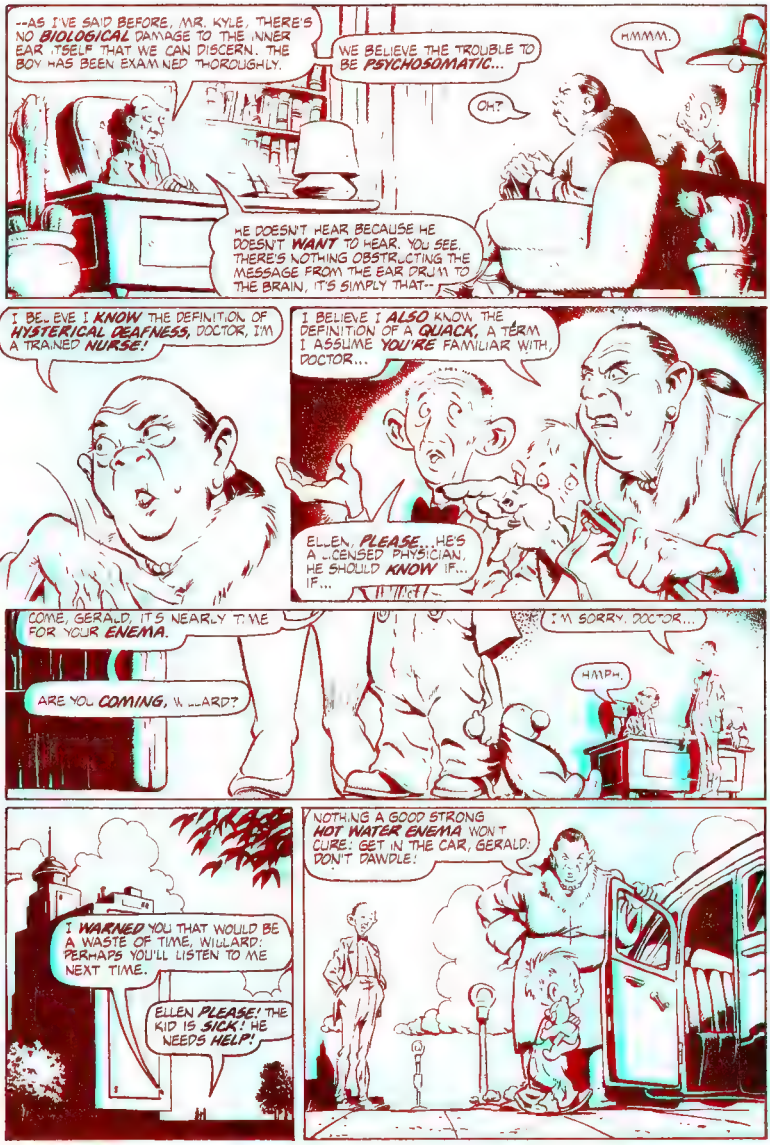
SORT OF ABSORB IT'S MIND, WHAT LITTLE MIND IT HAD...

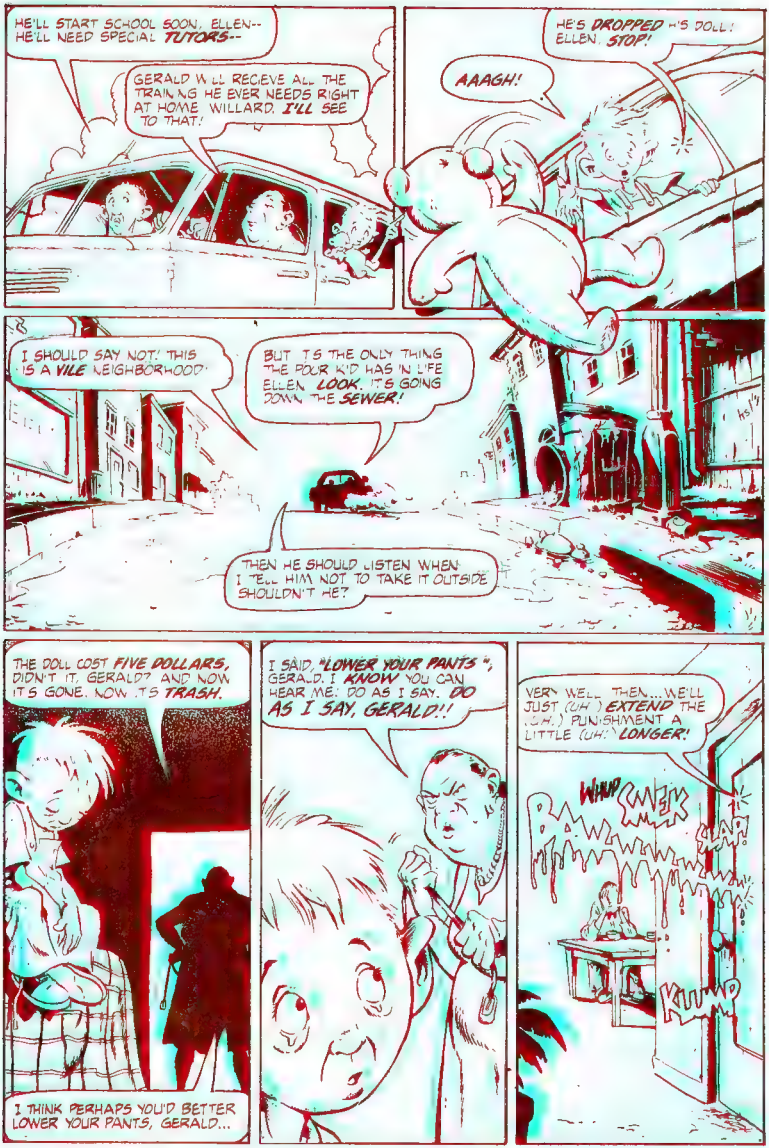
ONCE A ***BUTTERFLY*** HAD DRIFTED INTO THE SEWER AND SEG HAD ENTERED ITS MINISCULE MIND AND HAD FLAPPED AND FLUTTERED AND DIPPED AND THOUGHT—FOR A BRIEF TIME—BUTTERFLY THOUGHTS...

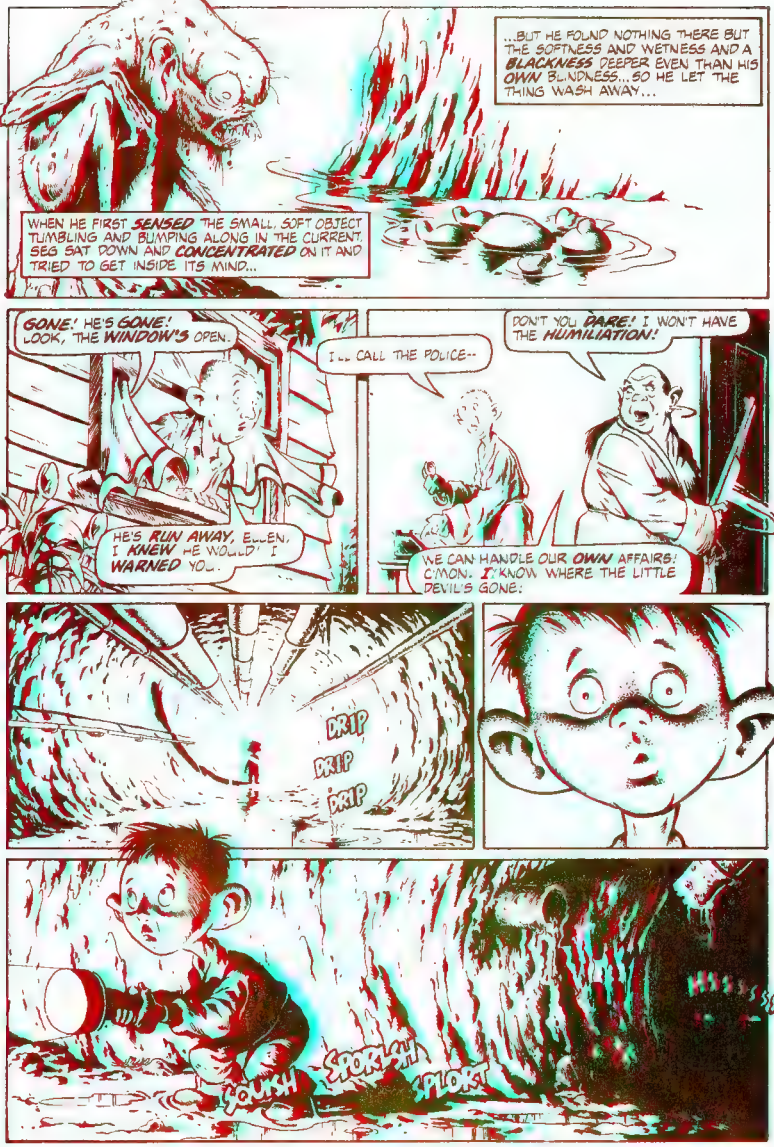
HE HAD STAYED INSIDE THE INSECT'S MIND UNTIL IT HAD ***LEFT*** THE SEWER AND FLOWN OUTSIDE HIGH ABOVE THE BUSY CITY AND SEG HAD SEEN ALL THE ***WONDROUS, COLORFUL, LOUD, STRANGE, HAUNTING*** SIGHTS BELOW THROUGH THE BUTTERFLY'S EYES...

BEEP BEEP

THEN THE LITTLE BUTTERFLY HAD FLOWN ***TOO*** FAR AWAY AND SEG WAS BACK IN THE DARKNESS AND DANKNESS WITH THE SOUNDS OF SCUTTLING VERMIN AND THE TRICKLING OF CESS WATER...

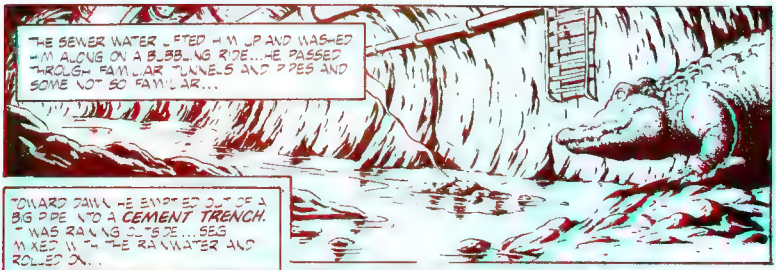

--AS I'VE SAID BEFORE, MR. KYLE, THERE'S NO BIOLOGICAL DAMAGE TO THE INNER EAR ITSELF THAT WE CAN DISCERN. THE BOY HAS BEEN EXAMINED THOROUGHLY.
WE BELIEVE THE TROUBLE TO BE PSYCHOSOMATIC...
HMMM.
OH?
HE DOESN'T HEAR BECAUSE HE DOESN'T WANT TO HEAR. YOU SEE, THERE'S NOTHING OBSTRUCTING THE MESSAGE FROM THE EAR DRUM TO THE BRAIN, IT'S SIMPLY THAT--
I BELIEVE I KNOW THE DEFINITION OF HYSTERICAL DEAFNESS, DOCTOR, I'M A TRAINED NURSE!
I BELIEVE I ALSO KNOW THE DEFINITION OF A QUACK, A TERM I ASSUME YOU'RE FAMILIAR WITH, DOCTOR...
ELLEN, PLEASE... HE'S A LICENSED PHYSICIAN. HE SHOULD KNOW IF... IF...
COME, GERALD, IT'S NEARLY TIME FOR YOUR ENEMA.
ARE YOU COMING, WILLARD?
I'M SORRY, DOCTOR...
HMPH.
I WARNED YOU THAT WOULD BE A WASTE OF TIME, WILLARD: PERHAPS YOU'LL LISTEN TO ME NEXT TIME.
ELLEN PLEASE! THE KID IS SICK! HE NEEDS HELP!
NOTHING A GOOD STRONG HOT WATER ENEMA WON'T CURE: GET IN THE CAR, GERALD: DON'T DAWDLE!


HE'LL START SCHOOL SOON, ELLEN-- HE'LL NEED SPECIAL TUTORS--
GERALD WILL RECEIVE ALL THE TRAINING HE EVER NEEDS RIGHT AT HOME, WILLARD. I'LL SEE TO THAT!
HE'S DROPPED HIS DOLL! ELLEN, STOP!
AAAGH!
I SHOULD SAY NOT! THIS IS A VILE NEIGHBORHOOD!
BUT IT'S THE ONLY THING THE POOR KID HAS IN LIFE ELLEN. LOOK. IT'S GOING DOWN THE SEWER!
THEN HE SHOULD LISTEN WHEN I TELL HIM NOT TO TAKE IT OUTSIDE SHOULDN'T HE?
THE DOLL COST FIVE DOLLARS, DIDN'T IT, GERALD? AND NOW IT'S GONE. NOW IT'S TRASH.
I THINK PERHAPS YOU'D BETTER LOWER YOUR PANTS, GERALD...
I SAID, "LOWER YOUR PANTS", GERALD. I KNOW YOU CAN HEAR ME. DO AS I SAY. DO AS I SAY, GERALD!!
VERY WELL THEN... WE'LL JUST (UH) EXTEND THE (UH,) PUNISHMENT A LITTLE (UH) LONGER!
WHAP
SWISH
SLAP!
KLUMP

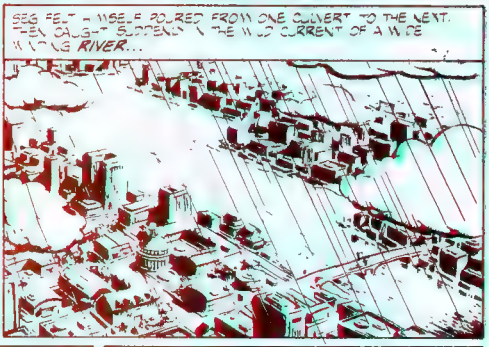

WHEN HE FIRST SENSED THE SMALL, SOFT OBJECT TUMBLING AND BUMPING ALONG IN THE CURRENT, SEG SAT DOWN AND CONCENTRATED ON IT AND TRIED TO GET INSIDE ITS MIND...
...BUT HE FOUND NOTHING THERE BUT THE SOFTNESS AND WETNESS AND A BLACKNESS DEEPER EVEN THAN HIS OWN BLINDNESS... SO HE LET THE THING WASH AWAY...
GONE! HE'S GONE! LOOK, THE WINDOW'S OPEN.
HE'S RUN AWAY, ELLEN, I KNEW HE WOULD! I WARNED YOU.
I... CALL THE POLICE--
DON'T YOU DARE! I WON'T HAVE THE HUMILIATION!
WE CAN HANDLE OUR OWN AFFAIRS! C'MON. I KNOW WHERE THE LITTLE DEVIL'S GONE.
DRIP
DRIP
DRIP
SQUISH
SPLORCH
SPLORT
SSSSSSS

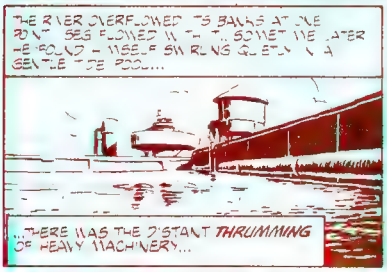
AAAARRGH!
AGH!
CHOMP!
THIS IS INSANE. THERE ARE RATS DOWN HERE. IT'S DANGEROUS
SHUT UP WILLARD. YES DOWN HERE I TELL YOU
SLURSH
SLURSH
SLURSH
SEG LISTENED QUIETLY. THIS NEW CREATURE WAS BREATHING RAPIDLY AND SENSED UNCONTROLLED FEAR, EMANATING FROM IT. SEG WONDERED IF HE SHOULD EAT THE NEW CREATURE...
PERHAPS... BUT IT MIGHT BE INTERESTING TO KEEP INSIDE THE CREATURES AND FIRST... YES, SEG THOUGHT HE MIGHT TRY THAT...

WHAT'S THAT?
SOMETHING COMING RUNNING THROUGH THE SEWER
SPLISH
SPLISH
SPLISH
GERALD! GERALD OVER HERE, BOY.
SPLISH
SPLISH
..LOOKS PALE AS A GHOST..
DO YOU SEE THAT ELLEN? I COULD HAVE SWORN HE HEARD ME CALLING.
WAIT A MINUTE-- H-H-WHAT'S THAT--?
HOLY JUMPIN --
GOD WHAT IS IT?
ELLEN, WAIT!
CLICK
BLA-DOW WHAM!
..T...MIGHT HAVE BEEN INTELLIGENT.
MASS OF JELLY NOW. WHATEVER IT WAS.
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE.
PAIN! FOR THE FIRST TIME, REAL PAIN! TERRIBLE PAIN. YET SEG WAS JUST AS AWARE NOW AS HE'D EVER BEEN...
...HE JUST COULDN'T MOVE ABOUT ANYMORE...
SPLICK SPLICK..

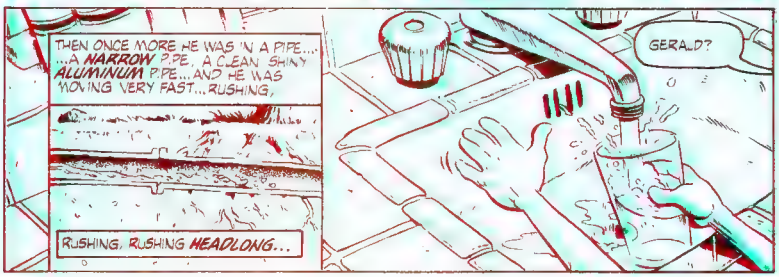

THE SEWER WATER LIFTED HIM UP AND WASHED HIM ALONG ON A BUBBLING RIDE...HE PASSED THROUGH FAMILIAR TUNNELS AND PIPES AND SOME NOT SO FAMILIAR...

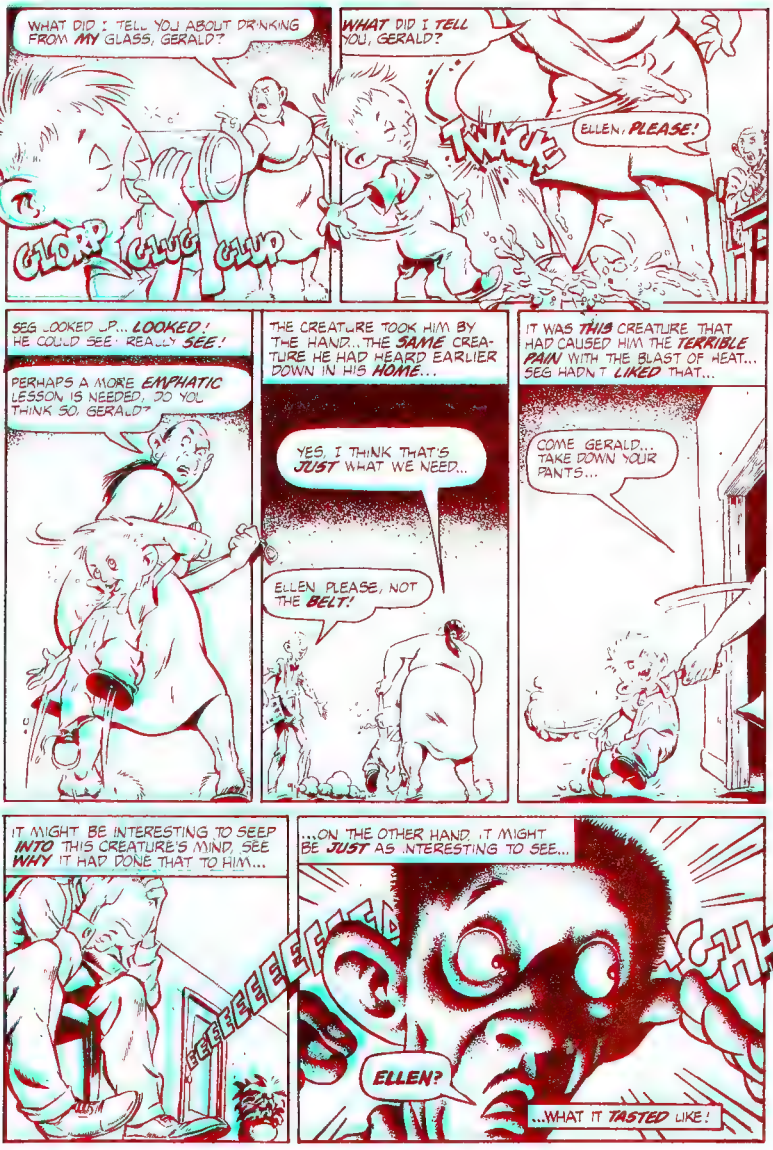
TOWARD DAWN HE EMPTIED OUT OF A BIG PIPE INTO A CEMENT TRENCH. IT WAS RAINING OUTSIDE...SEG MIXED IN THE RAINWATER AND ROLLED ON..


SEG FELT HIMSELF POURED FROM ONE CULVERT TO THE NEXT. THEN CAUGHT SUDDENLY IN THE WILD CURRENT OF A WIDE HOWLING RIVER...


THE RIVER OVERFLOWED ITS BANKS AT THE RAIL. SEG FLOWED IN THE WATER. SOMETIME LATER HE FOUND HIMSELF SWIRLING QUIETLY IN A GENTLE EDDY....
...THERE WAS THE DISTANT THRUMMING OF HEAVY MACHINERY...

SEG FLOATED...THE SUN CAME UP AND BEAT WARMLY ON HIS SURFACE, THEN WENT DOWN AGAIN, AND HE SENSED THE BRIGHT STARS OVERHEAD...HE DRIFTED LAZILY TOWARD A WIDE GATE. FELT HIMSELF FILTERED THROUGH A NARROW GRATING...


THEN ONCE MORE HE WAS IN A PIPE.... ...A NARROW PIPE... A CLEAN, SHINY ALUMINUM PIPE...AND HE WAS MOVING VERY FAST...RUSHING,
RUSHING, RUSHING HEADLONG...
GERALD?


WHAT DID I TELL YOU ABOUT DRINKING FROM MY GLASS, GERALD?
GLORP
GLUG
GLUP
WHAT DID I TELL YOU, GERALD?
WHAP
ELLEN, PLEASE!
SEG LOOKED UP... LOOKED! HE COULD SEE - REALLY SEE!
PERHAPS A MORE EMPHATIC LESSON IS NEEDED. DO YOU THINK SO, GERALD?
THE CREATURE TOOK HIM BY THE HAND...THE SAME CREATURE HE HAD HEARD EARLIER DOWN IN HIS HOME...
YES, I THINK THAT'S JUST WHAT WE NEED...
ELLEN PLEASE, NOT THE BELT!
IT WAS THIS CREATURE THAT HAD CAUSED HIM THE TERRIBLE PAIN WITH THE BLAST OF HEAT... SEG HADN'T LIKED THAT...
COME GERALD... TAKE DOWN YOUR PANTS...
IT MIGHT BE INTERESTING TO SEEP INTO THIS CREATURE'S MIND, SEE WHY IT HAD DONE THAT TO HIM...
EEEEEEEEE
...ON THE OTHER HAND, IT MIGHT BE JUST AS INTERESTING TO SEE...
ELLEN?
...WHAT IT TASTED LIKE!

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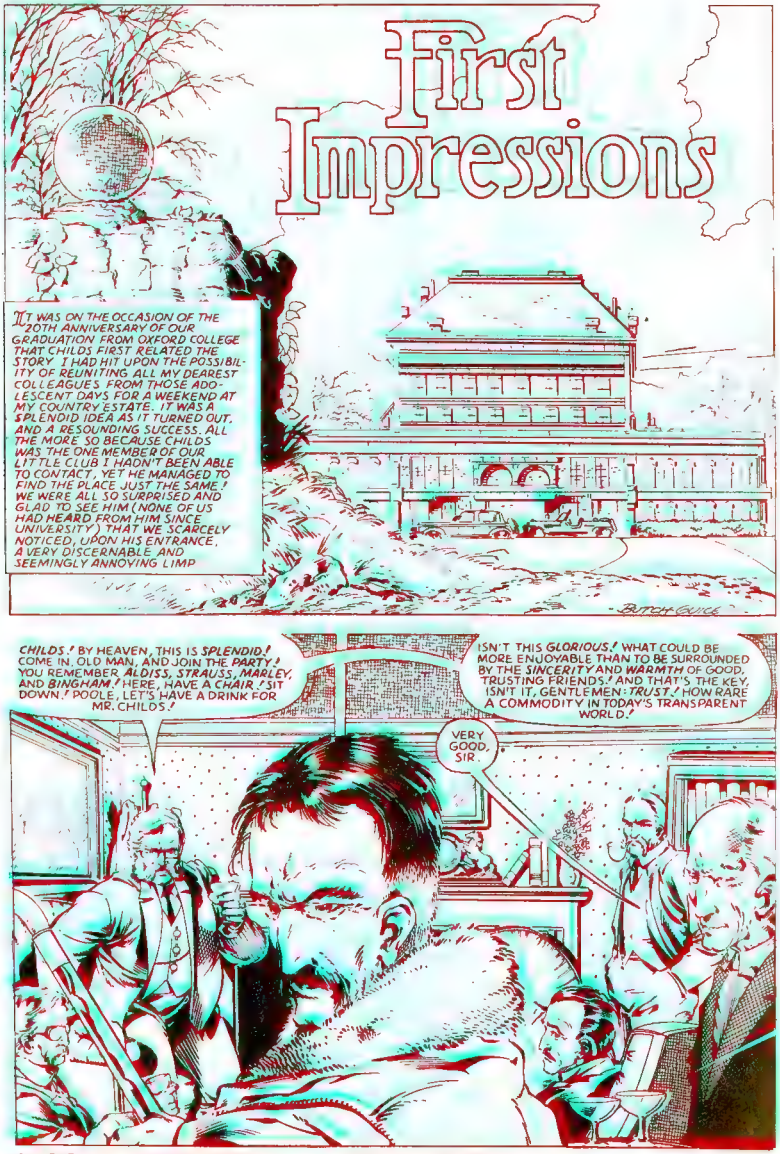
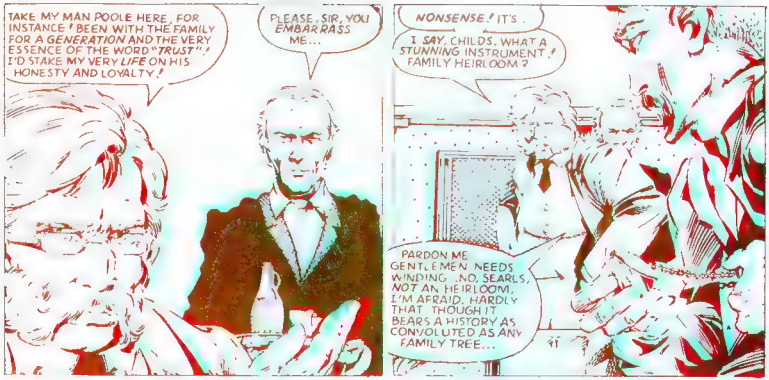
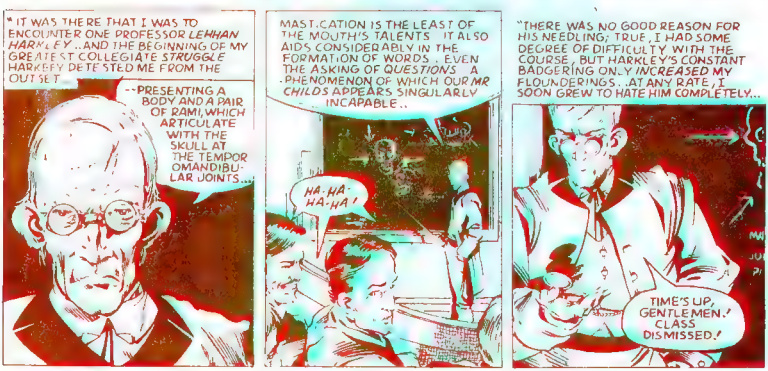

First Impressions
IT WAS ON THE OCCASION OF THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF OUR GRADUATION FROM OXFORD COLLEGE THAT CHILDS FIRST RELATED THE STORY. I HAD HIT UPON THE POSSIBILITY OF REUNITING ALL MY DEAREST COLLEAGUES FROM THOSE ADOLESCENT DAYS FOR A WEEKEND AT MY COUNTRY ESTATE. IT WAS A SPLENDID IDEA AS IT TURNED OUT, AND A RESOUNDING SUCCESS, ALL THE MORE SO BECAUSE CHILDS WAS THE ONE MEMBER OF OUR LITTLE CLUB I HADN'T BEEN ABLE TO CONTACT. YET HE MANAGED TO FIND THE PLACE JUST THE SAME. WE WERE ALL SO SURPRISED AND GLAD TO SEE HIM (NONE OF US HAD HEARD FROM HIM SINCE UNIVERSITY) THAT WE SCARCELY NOTICED, UPON HIS ENTRANCE, A VERY DISCERNABLE AND SEEMINGLY ANNOYING LIMP.
BRUCE GUICE
CHILDS! BY HEAVEN, THIS IS SPLENDID! COME IN, OLD MAN, AND JOIN THE PARTY! YOU REMEMBER ALDISS, STRAUSS, MARLEY, AND BINGHAM! HERE, HAVE A CHAIR! SIT DOWN! POOLE, LET'S HAVE A DRINK FOR MR. CHILDS!
ISN'T THIS GLORIOUS! WHAT COULD BE MORE ENJOYABLE THAN TO BE SURROUNDED BY THE SINCERITY AND WARMTH OF GOOD, TRUSTING FRIENDS! AND THAT'S THE KEY, ISN'T IT, GENTLEMEN: TRUST! HOW RARE A COMMODITY IN TODAY'S TRANSPARENT WORLD!
VERY GOOD, SIR.

Art & Story by **BRUCE GUICE** 3-D Effects by **FRITSCH**

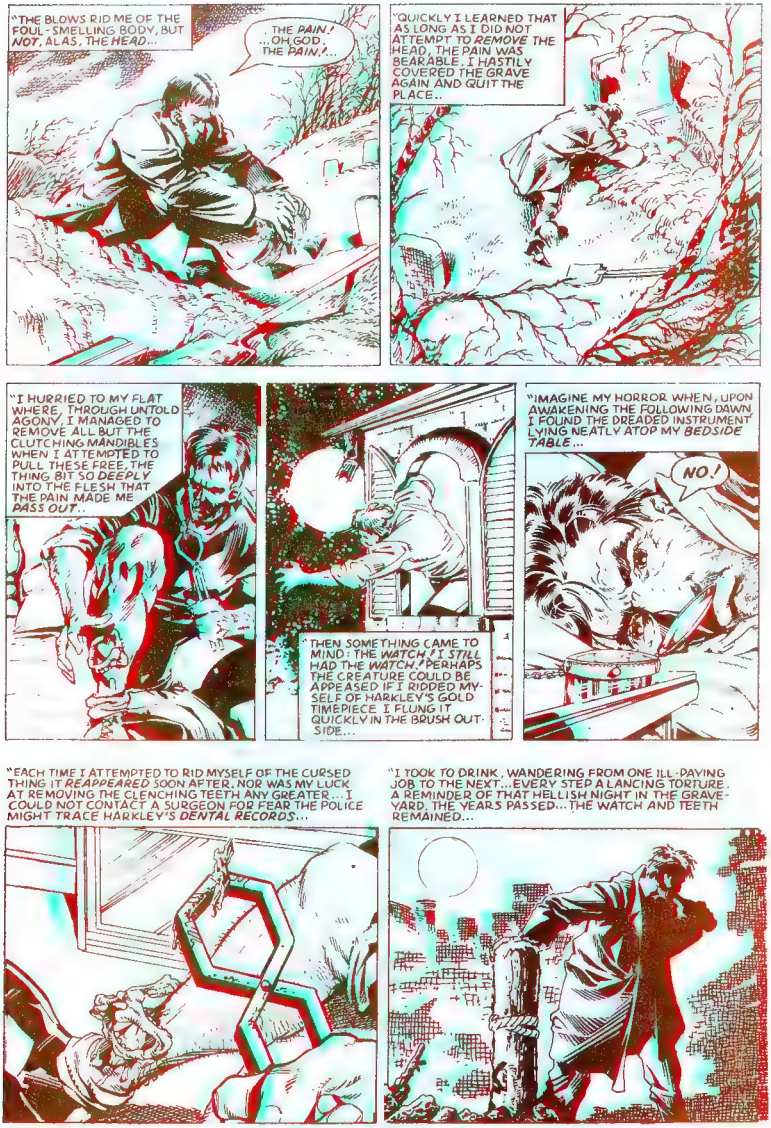

TAKE MY MAN POOLE HERE, FOR INSTANCE! BEEN WITH THE FAMILY FOR A GENERATION AND THE VERY ESSENCE OF THE WORD "TRUST"! I'D STAKE MY VERY LIFE ON HIS HONESTY AND LOYALTY!
PLEASE, SIR, YOU EMBARRASS ME...
NONSENSE! IT'S...
I SAY, CHILDS, WHAT A STUNNING INSTRUMENT! FAMILY HEIRLOOM?
PARDON ME GENTLEMEN NEEDS WINDING...NO, SEARLS, NOT AN HEIRLOOM, I'M AFRAID, HARDLY THAT THOUGH IT BEARS A HISTORY AS CONVOLUTED AS ANY FAMILY TREE...

NOW TALK OF TRUST AND LOYALTY GIVES ME PAUSE, SEARLS OLD MAN I WONDER HOW THE GROUP OF YOU WOULD REGARD YOUR OLD SCHOOL MATE IF I WERE TO RELATE THE ORIGINS OF THIS TIMEPIECE
FORGE AHEAD CHILDS, WE'RE ALL EARS!
VERY WELL THEN...AS YOU SURELY MUST REMEMBER, I QUIT OXFORD IN MY JUNIOR YEAR TO PURSUE MY STUDIES AT BRIDWELL COLLEGE IN THE NORTH. BRIDWELL, I FELT, OFFERED A SUPERIOR COURSE IN ANATOMY.
YES, YES INDEED!

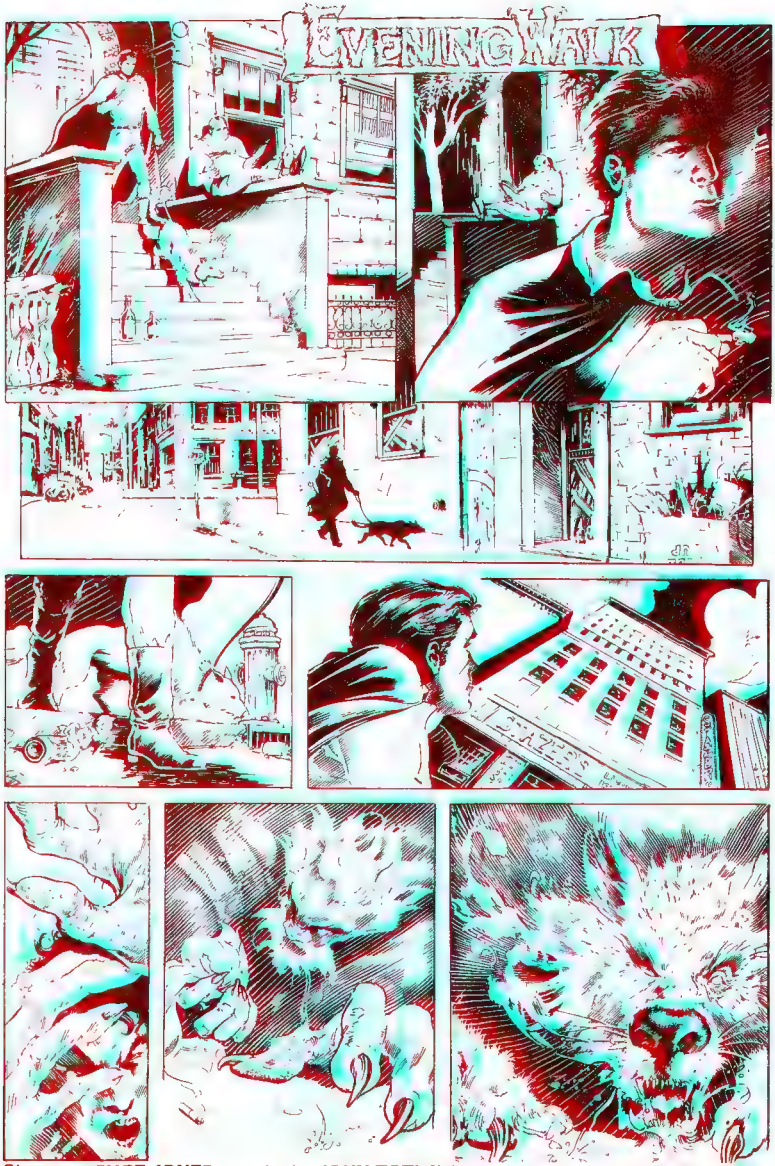

"IT WAS THERE THAT I WAS TO ENCOUNTER ONE PROFESSOR LEHHAN HARKLEY...AND THE BEGINNING OF MY GREATEST COLLEGIATE STRUGGLE HARDLY DETESTED ME FROM THE OUTSET...
--PRESENTING A BODY AND A PAIR OF RAMI, WHICH ARTICULATE WITH THE SKULL AT THE TEMPOROMANDIBULAR JOINTS...
MASTICATION IS THE LEAST OF THE MOUTH'S TALENTS IT ALSO AIDS CONSIDERABLY IN THE FORMATION OF WORDS. EVEN THE ASKING OF QUESTIONS A PHENOMENON OF WHICH OUR MR CHILDS APPEARS SINGULARLY INCAPABLE...
HA-HA-HA-HA!
"THERE WAS NO GOOD REASON FOR HIS NEEDLING; TRUE, I HAD SOME DEGREE OF DIFFICULTY WITH THE COURSE, BUT HARKLEY'S CONSTANT BADGERING ONLY INCREASED MY FLOUNDERINGS. AT ANY RATE, I SOON GREW TO HATE HIM COMPLETELY...
TIME'S UP, GENTLEMEN! CLASS DISMISSED!

"TOWARD THE END OF THE TERM, MY GRADES PLUMMETED. ADMITTEDLY, THEY WERE WEAK, BUT *NOT* AS WEAK AS HARKLEY MARKED THEM...
YOU MIGHT DO BETTER TO DALLY WITH TOMORROW'S *EXAMINATION* QUESTIONS, MR. CHILDS, THAN WITH THE LOCAL *FAUNA*...
YOU HAVE EXACTLY THIRTY MINUTES, GENTLEMEN.. YOU MAY BEGIN!
"NATURALLY, I FAILED. WHEN I LEARNED OF MY GRADES, I STORMED ACROSS CAMPUS TO VOICE MY COMPLAINT TO HARKLEY'S SMUG FACE... I NEVER GOT THE *CHANCE*, HOWEVER EVER... *FATE* HAD SEEN TO THAT...
HOW'D IT HAPPEN?
HEART ATTACK...
"I HAD SPENT ALL MY MONEY ON TUITION AND HARKLEY HAD WASHED ME OUT. I WAS *PENNILESS* AND *DIPLOMALESS*. I WANTED MORE THAN ANYTHING TO RETURN THE PAIN AND HUMILIATION THIS MAN HAD INFLICTED UPON ME... YET *HOW*?
"I WAS YOUNG... I WAS FOOLISH... I WAS *MORTIFIED* BEYOND MEASURE... I TOOK A JOB AS A DISHWASHER IN A LOCAL PUB WHILE MY *HATRED* FANNED EVER *HIGHER*...
"THEN... MONTHS LATER, I RESOLVED TO DO THAT WHICH I HAVE SPENT THESE PAST DECADES REGRETTING... TO *DESECRATE* HARKLEY'S GRAVE...
"IT WAS A FULL MOON... I FOUND THE COFFIN EASILY...

DEAR GOD..
"HARKLEY HAD RUINED MY FIRST ATTEMPTS AT AN EDUCATION ..
--NOW HE CAN BUY ME A SECOND CHANCE.!
"I WAS EXAMINING THE BEAUTIFULLY WROUGHT GOLD CASING THERE IN THE MOONLIGHT WHEN I FIRST FELT THAT TERRIBLE SEARING PAIN IN MY ANKLE ..
AGH.!
GOOD CHRIST.!
"THE PAIN WAS INDESCRIBABLE. I TORE FRANTICALLY AT THE MAGGOT-EATEN MOUTH, BUT THE CRUEL YELLOW TEETH OF THE THING HELD FAST...
UH-H.!
"THE MORE I STRUGGLED WITH THE GRINNING HORROR, THE TIGHTER THOSE TERRIBLE TEETH BIT INTO MY AGONIZED FLESH...
OH GOD.. SOMEBODY HELP ME.!
WHACK!
CRUNCH!
"BUT THERE WAS NO ONE TO WHOM I COULD GO-- GRAVE ROBBERS WERE DEALT WITH SWIFTLY IN THAT PROVINCE... I WAS FINALLY OBLIGED TO GRAB UP THE SHOVEL...


"THE BLOWS RID ME OF THE FOUL-SMELLING BODY, BUT NOT, ALAS, THE HEAD...
THE PAIN! ...OH GOD. THE PAIN!...
"QUICKLY I LEARNED THAT AS LONG AS I DID NOT ATTEMPT TO REMOVE THE HEAD, THE PAIN WAS BEARABLE. I HASTILY COVERED THE GRAVE AGAIN AND QUIT THE PLACE..
"I HURRIED TO MY FLAT WHERE, THROUGH UNTOLD AGONY, I MANAGED TO REMOVE ALL BUT THE CLUTCHING MANDIBLES WHEN I ATTEMPTED TO PULL THESE FREE, THE THING BIT SO DEEPLY INTO THE FLESH THAT THE PAIN MADE ME PASS OUT..
"THEN SOMETHING CAME TO MIND: THE WATCH! I STILL HAD THE WATCH! PERHAPS THE CREATURE COULD BE APPEASED IF I RIDDED MYSELF OF HARKLEY'S GOLD TIMEPIECE. I FLUNG IT QUICKLY IN THE BRUSH OUTSIDE...
"IMAGINE MY HORROR WHEN, UPON AWAKENING THE FOLLOWING DAWN, I FOUND THE DREADED INSTRUMENT LYING NEATLY ATOP MY BEDSIDE TABLE...
NO!
"EACH TIME I ATTEMPTED TO RID MYSELF OF THE CURSED THING IT REAPPEARED SOON AFTER, NOR WAS MY LUCK AT REMOVING THE CLENCHING TEETH ANY GREATER... I COULD NOT CONTACT A SURGEON FOR FEAR THE POLICE MIGHT TRACE HARKLEY'S DENTAL RECORDS...
"I TOOK TO DRINK, WANDERING FROM ONE ILL-PAYING JOB TO THE NEXT... EVERY STEP A LANCING TORTURE. A REMINDER OF THAT HELLISH NIGHT IN THE GRAVEYARD. THE YEARS PASSED... THE WATCH AND TEETH REMAINED...

..WHICH BRINGS US TO THE PRESENT, GENTLEMEN.
GOOD GOD, CHILDS, WHAT A GRISLY TALE!
THANK YOU, POOLE. WHAT DID YOU THINK OF MY STORY?
RIPPING, SIR! BITING ENDING.!
THAT DID IT. THE SOBER SOUNDLESS ROOM ERUPTED ABRUPTLY INTO UNBRIDLED LAUGHTER...
HAHA HAHAHA!
CHILDS, YOU OLD DOG! I KNEW IT WAS MADE UP ALL ALONG!
HOW DID YOU GET THAT GAMEY LEG?
BLOODY RIDING HORSE KICKED ME AT BRIDWELL! HAD THIS LIMP EVER SINCE! WATCH BELONGED TO MY GRANDPAPA!
GOOD NIGHT, GENTLEMEN! THAT'S ENOUGH GHOST STORIES FOR ONE EVENING!
IT MUST HAVE BEEN PAST THREE IN THE MORNING WHEN THE TERRIBLE WAILING, HYSTERICAL LAUGHTER AWAKENED US
HA-HA-HA-HA-HA! GONE! HA-HA! GONE! GONE!
WE RUSHED TO THE SOURCE OF THE UNCONTROLLED TITTERING - CHILDS' ROOM...
GOOD GOD, LOOK AT HIS LEG!
GONE! HA-HA! THE CURSED THING IS GONE!
TEETH MARKS!
THAT'S WHEN THE SECOND TERRIFYING SCREAM CUT THROUGH THE HOUSE
WHAT THE DEVIL...
EEAAGGAARRHH
DOWNSTAIRS! QUICKLY!
POOLE!
HIS FACE! LOOKS AS THOUGH HE DIED OF SOME TERRIBLE SHOCK!
WHAT'S THAT CLUTCHED IN HIS HAND...?
THE WATCH! CHILDS' GOLD WATCH!
NEVER MIND THE WATCH... WHAT THE DEVIL IS THAT ATTACHED TO HIS LEFT ANKLE...??

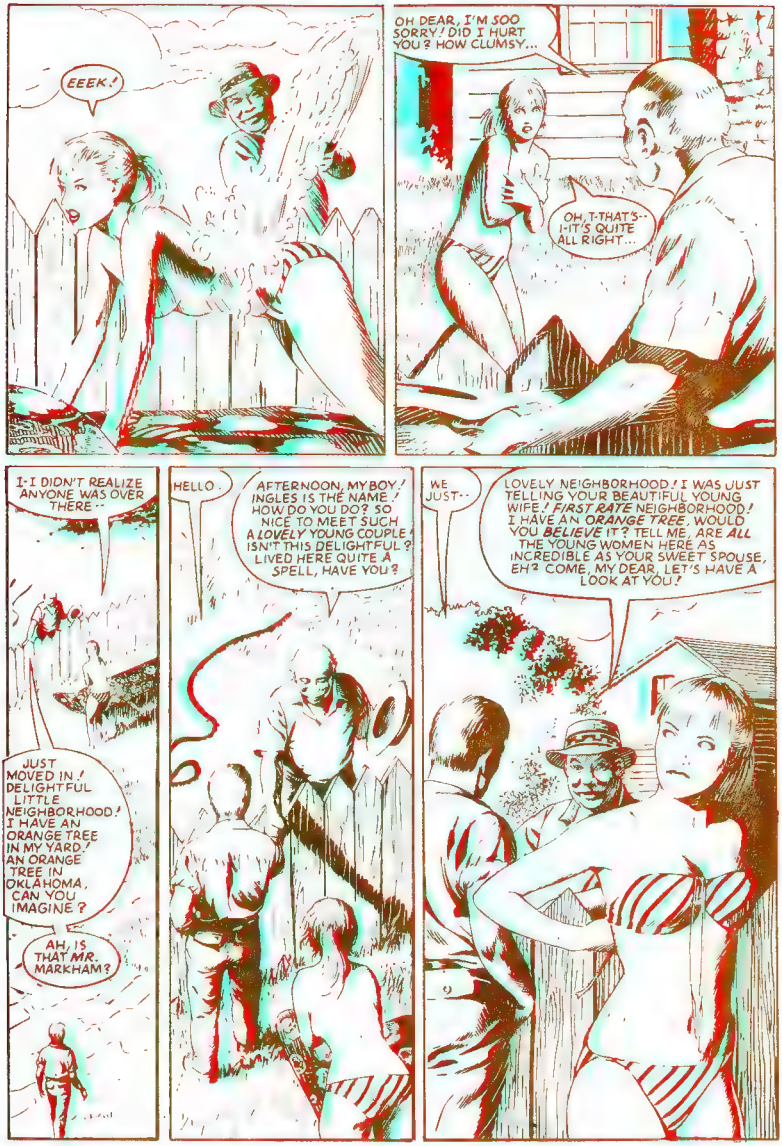


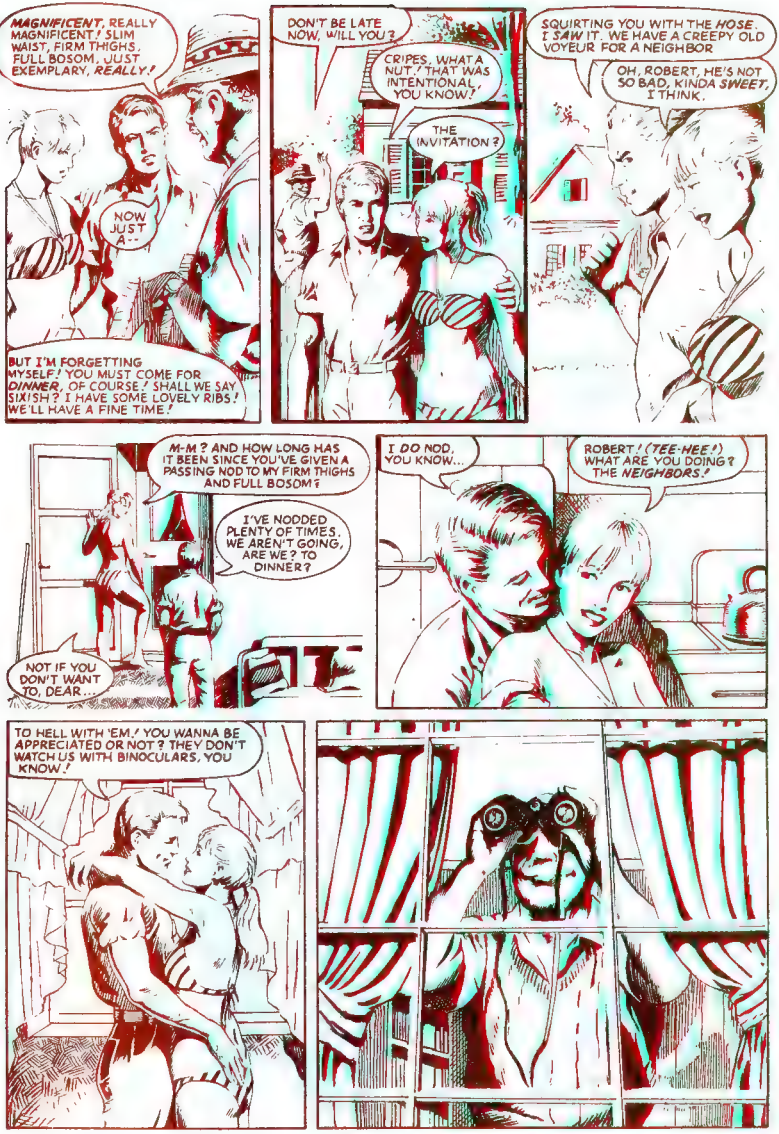
Story by **BRUCE JONES** Art by **JOHN TOTLEBEN** 3-D Effects by **FRITSCH**

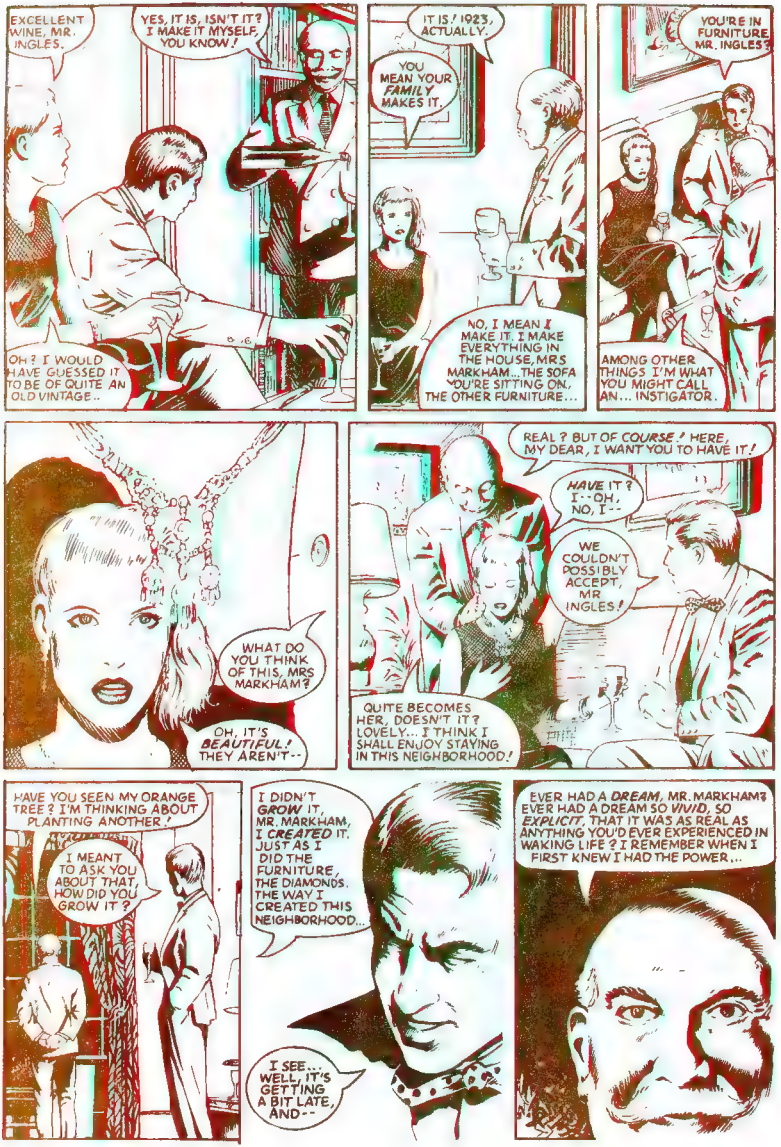
YOU, ILLUSION

YOU CAN'T IMAGINE THE INCREDIBLE PAIN, THE SEARING DRIVING AGONY OF IT, SO I WON'T EVEN ATTEMPT TO DESCRIBE IT. ONE HAS TO LIVE IT TO APPRECIATE IT FULLY. I LIVED IT. I LIVED EVERY BRAIN-SHATTERING, MIND-SCREAMING MICRO-SECOND OF IT. AND THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD DO ABOUT IT--NOTHING ANYONE COULD DO ABOUT IT... NO ONE BUT INGLES, THAT IS. AND INGLES WOULDN'T COOPERATE. INGLES WOULDN'T EVEN TRY.' OH, HE SAID HE WAS TRYING, HE SAID HE WAS DOING HIS BEST, BUT ALL I SAW WAS THE ENDLESS ROUNDS OF BLACKJACK... THE SUN COMING UP OVER THE TREES IN HIS BACKYARD... AND ALL I FELT WAS THE UNENDING TORTURE FLOODING THROUGH ME, PRAYING, SCREAMING FOR RELEASE...

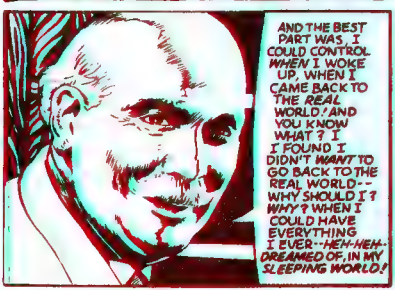
Story by **BRUCE JONES**
3-D Effects by **FRITSCH**
Art by **JOHN BOLTON**
Letters by **CARRIE McCARTHY**

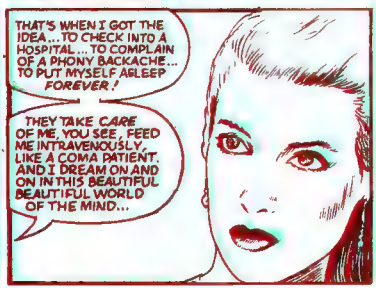

EEEK!
OH DEAR, I'M SOO SORRY! DID I HURT YOU? HOW CLUMSY...
OH, T-THAT'S.. I-IT'S QUITE ALL RIGHT..
I-I DIDN'T REALIZE ANYONE WAS OVER THERE..
JUST MOVED IN! DELIGHTFUL LITTLE NEIGHBORHOOD! I HAVE AN ORANGE TREE IN MY YARD! AN ORANGE TREE IN OKLAHOMA, CAN YOU IMAGINE?
AH, IS THAT MR. MARKHAM?
HELLO.
AFTERNOON, MY BOY! INGLES IS THE NAME! HOW DO YOU DO? SO NICE TO MEET SUCH A LOVELY YOUNG COUPLE! ISN'T THIS DELIGHTFUL? LIVED HERE QUITE A SPELL, HAVE YOU?
WE JUST..
LOVELY NEIGHBORHOOD! I WAS JUST TELLING YOUR BEAUTIFUL YOUNG WIFE! FIRST RATE NEIGHBORHOOD! I HAVE AN ORANGE TREE, WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT? TELL ME, ARE ALL THE YOUNG WOMEN HERE AS INCREDIBLE AS YOUR SWEET SPOUSE, EH? COME, MY DEAR, LET'S HAVE A LOOK AT YOU!


MAGNIFICENT. REALLY MAGNIFICENT! SLIM WAIST, FIRM THIGHS, FULL BOSOM, JUST EXEMPLARY, REALLY!
NOW JUST A--
BUT I'M FORGETTING MYSELF! YOU MUST COME FOR DINNER, OF COURSE! SHALL WE SAY SIX!SH? I HAVE SOME LOVELY RIBS! WE'LL HAVE A FINE TIME!
DON'T BE LATE NOW, WILL YOU?
CRIPES, WHAT A NUT.' THAT WAS INTENTIONAL, YOU KNOW?
THE INVITATION?
SQUIRTING YOU WITH THE HOSE. I SAW IT. WE HAVE A CREEPY OLD VOYEUR FOR A NEIGHBOR
OH, ROBERT, HE'S NOT SO BAD, KINDA SWEET, I THINK.
M-M? AND HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN SINCE YOU'VE GIVEN A PASSING NOD TO MY FIRM THIGHS AND FULL BOSOM?
I'VE NODDED PLENTY OF TIMES. WE AREN'T GOING, ARE WE? TO DINNER?
NOT IF YOU DON'T WANT TO, DEAR..
I DO NOD, YOU KNOW...
ROBERT! (TEE-HEE!) WHAT ARE YOU DOING? THE NEIGHBORS!
TO HELL WITH 'EM.' YOU WANNA BE APPRECIATED OR NOT? THEY DON'T WATCH US WITH BINOCULARS, YOU KNOW!


EXCELLENT WINE, MR. INGLES.
YES, IT IS, ISN'T IT? I MAKE IT MYSELF, YOU KNOW!
OH? I WOULD HAVE GUESSED IT TO BE OF QUITE AN OLD VINTAGE..
IT IS,' 1923, ACTUALLY.
YOU MEAN YOUR FAMILY MAKES IT.
NO, I MEAN I MAKE IT. I MAKE EVERYTHING IN THE HOUSE, MRS MARKHAM.. THE SOFA YOU'RE SITTING ON, THE OTHER FURNITURE...
YOU'RE IN FURNITURE, MR. INGLES?
AMONG OTHER THINGS I'M WHAT YOU MIGHT CALL AN... INSTIGATOR.
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THIS, MRS MARKHAM?
OH, IT'S BEAUTIFUL! THEY AREN'T--
REAL? BUT OF COURSE! HERE, MY DEAR, I WANT YOU TO HAVE IT!
HAVE IT? I--OH, NO, I--
WE COULDN'T POSSIBLY ACCEPT, MR INGLES!
QUITE BECOMES HER, DOESN'T IT? LOVELY... I THINK I SHALL ENJOY STAYING IN THIS NEIGHBORHOOD!
HAVE YOU SEEN MY ORANGE TREE? I'M THINKING ABOUT PLANTING ANOTHER!
I MEANT TO ASK YOU ABOUT THAT, HOW DID YOU GROW IT?
I DIDN'T GROW IT, MR. MARKHAM, I CREATED IT. JUST AS I DID THE FURNITURE, THE DIAMONDS. THE WAY I CREATED THIS NEIGHBORHOOD...
I SEE... WELL, IT'S GETTING A BIT LATE, AND--
EVER HAD A DREAM, MR. MARKHAM? EVER HAD A DREAM SO VIVID, SO EXPLICIT, THAT IT WAS AS REAL AS ANYTHING YOU'D EVER EXPERIENCED IN WAKING LIFE? I REMEMBER WHEN I FIRST KNEW I HAD THE POWER...

" IT WAS DURING THE COURSE OF ONE OF THOSE TYPICALLY HEROIC DREAMS WE ALL HAVE--YOU KNOW, SHINING KNIGHT SLAYS THE DRAGON, WINS THE FAIR MAIDEN...
"AS I STOOD THERE WATCHING MY BEAUTIFUL PRIZE, I BECAME AWARE OF THE POWER FLOODING THROUGH ME... THE CONTROL I HAD OVER THE SCENE... THE YOUNG LADY... I WISHED HER BLONDE--AND SUDDENLY SHE WAS BLONDE!
"THAT WAS THE BEGINNING, BUT I DIDN'T STOP THERE. I WISHED HER A REDHEAD. SHE BECAME A REDHEAD. I WISHED HER PLUMPER, AND SHE WAS PLUMPER... SLIMMER AND SHE OBEYED. I WISHED THREE OF HER, SIX OF HER, A DOZEN OF HER, AND MY DESIRES WERE FULFILLED!
"I COULD CHANGE THE LOCALE FROM A TANGLED WOOD TO A DESERT ISLE... I COULD HAVE A SINGLE WOMAN OR A THOUSAND WOMEN, EACH MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN THE ONE BEFORE... AND EACH VIVID AND BREATHING AND ALIVE DOWN TO THE SMALLEST DETAIL... "


AND THE BEST PART WAS, I COULD CONTROL WHEN I WOKE UP, WHEN I CAME BACK TO THE REAL WORLD! AND YOU KNOW WHAT? I I FOUND I DIDN'T WANT TO GO BACK TO THE REAL WORLD--WHY SHOULD I? WHY? WHEN I COULD HAVE EVERYTHING I EVER--HEH-HEH-DREAMED OF, IN MY SLEEPING WORLD!


THAT'S WHEN I GOT THE IDEA... TO CHECK INTO A HOSPITAL... TO COMPLAIN OF A PHONY BACKACHE... TO PUT MYSELF ASLEEP FOREVER!
THEY TAKE CARE OF ME, YOU SEE, FEED ME INTRAVENOUSLY, LIKE A COMA PATIENT. AND I DREAM ON AND ON IN THIS BEAUTIFUL BEAUTIFUL WORLD OF THE MIND...

(AHEM!)...IT, UH, SOUNDS FASCINATING, MR. INGLES, BUT WE REALLY MUST··
DON'T YOU EVER GET BORED, MR. INGLES? DON'T YOU EVER WANT TO RETURN TO THE REAL WORLD?
OCCASIONALLY, AND I DO IT THE SAME WAY I GET INTO THIS WORLD I FALL ASLEEP.' FALLING ASLEEP BRINGS ME BACK TO CONSCIOUSNESS.' HA HA! REMARKABLE, NO?
EXCEPT THAT I'M SO RARELY SLEEPY IN MY DREAM WORLD IN FACT, ABOUT THE ONLY THING THAT WILL REALLY MAKE ME NOD OFF IS A GOOD LONG BORING GAME OF BLACKJACK. I DETEST CARDS, YOU KNOW!
REALLY, BETH, IT'S GETTING LATE...
MRS. MARKHAM DOESN'T WANT TO GO, DO YOU, MY DEAR? MRS. MARKHAM IS ENTRANCED WITH ME... WANTS TO KNOW MORE ABOUT ME, DON'T YOU, DEAREST BETH?...
..I...
LOVELY.. SO LOVELY.. BUT I DON'T MUCH LIKE THAT DRESS ANYMORE...
..SHALL WE GET RID OF IT?
BETTER! THAT'S MUCH BETTER!
WHAT THE HELL--!!
CRACK!
SLIMY CREEP!
(HEH-HEH!) IT'S MORE FUN WHEN THE JEALOUS HUSBAND IS AROUND, DON'T YOU THINK, ROBERT? HA-HA-HA!

I HOPE YOU'RE SATISFIED NOW! I TOLD YOU THAT GUY WAS A NUT!
..HIS VOICE.. SO COMPELLING...
I'LL SEND A COP AROUND TOMORROW LET'S GET SOME SLEEP NOW
HIS EYES...I NEVER SAW SUCH A LOOK OF RAW ANIMAL..LUST...IT WAS TERRIFYING...
SUPPOSE IT WERE TRUE, ROBERT... SUPPOSE HE REALLY COULD DO THAT... LIVE IN A WORLD WITHOUT MORALS, WITHOUT LAWS, WHERE YOUR EVERY WHIM WAS JUST A THOUGHT AWAY...
ARE YOU TERRIFIED OR ENVIOUS?
HEY! WHAT-- CHRIST!
BETH! THE LAMP! LOOK AT THE LAMP!
BETH?..
GLICK
BETH!! NO!!

INGLES! INGLES!!
INGLES! NO! WAKE UP!
INGLES! WAKE UP!
..EH WHA--??
TISK-TISK! YOU SHOULD HAVE LET ME SLEEP, MY BOY... THERE'S REALLY NOTHING I CAN DO ONCE THE PROCESS HAS BEGUN...
IS THE PAIN QUITE TERRIBLE?... YES, IT MUST BE...
I'LL NEVER GET BACK TO SLEEP NOW! OH, WELL, I SUPPOSE WE CAN GIVE IT A TRY. YOU DO PLAY BLACKJACK, DON'T YOU, MY BOY? I'LL GET THE CARDS...
..BLURBLE..
HOURS NOW... ENDLESS, HIDEOUSLY PAINFUL HOURS... AND ONE AWFUL THOUGHT KEEPS PECKING AT MY TORTURED BRAIN... COULD INGLES MAKE IT ALL RIGHT AGAIN, IF HE WANTED TO, COULD HE MAKE BETH AND ME NORMAL... OR IS THIS HIS WAY OF PUNISHING ME?...
BLACKJACK! (HEE-HEE!) I WIN!

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

In the two years since I started **Blackthorne Publishing, Inc.**, we've grown tremendously. As you know, we started out publishing the successful *Reuben Award Winner* series, our *Blackthorne Comic Strip Preserves* series, and a handful of *Limited Edition Artist Portfolios.*

Here in August of 1986 we are up to *ten new products* per month. We've expanded our product line to include: original black and white comics, three dimensional comics, trade paperback books and limited edition trade hardcover books, and plans for a full color line are in the works.

Our staff has grown to include Paul Tallerday and Lynn Cobb, two of the finest art production people you'll find anywhere; Shel Dorf; Cliff MacGillivray, who on a part time basis handles the marketing and promotions and some of the editorial load; and of course, my partner, wife and friend, Ann E. Fera who handles customer service as well as circulation.

We are still a small company, and haven't yet started to work with "many of the big names," but have been able to work with and develop some up-and-coming talented newcomers. People like William Van Horn, Robert L. Crabb, Steve Huston, Nicholas Koenig, Mark Wayne Harris, Dwayne Ferguson, Andy Ice, Dave Garcia, John Williams, Hank Mayo, Walter Stuart, and many, many more.

We have been able to put our an excellent product mix, and bring it to the readers only with the help of our distributors and the retailers who gave our titles an opportunity to reach the buying public. Their efforts are greatly appreciated.

We've only just begun, and we've got a long way to go, and lot of big things waiting to happen. So stay with us, you'll be glad you did.

Steve Schanes
Publisher

☐ **PRE-TEEN DIRTY-GENE KUNG-FU KANGAROOS #1** Lee Marrs' parody of "American Flagg." Five Australian exchange students are transformed by a freak biogenetic lab accident.

☐ **DICK TRACY MONTHLY #4** Tracy wraps up his adventure with Yogee Yamma and the Professor with a fiery conclusion!

☐ **TALES OF THE JACKALOPE #4** Robert L. Crabb's zany adventures of Junior Jackalope and Suicide Squirrel continue with two new stories, plus Jackalope featurettes!

☐ **NERVOUS REX #7** William Van Horn brings us 3 great stories: A *Snail Tale, Tough Plucking Luck* and *Cold Comfort*! Don't miss it!!

☐ **GUMBY 3-D SPECIAL #1** Art Clokey's legendary Gumby and his pals star in dynamic 3-D! Glasses included.

☐ **DICK TRACY, Book 8** Dick Tracy's hot on the heels of the notorious Mrs. Volts and her gang of thieves. Black market adventure!

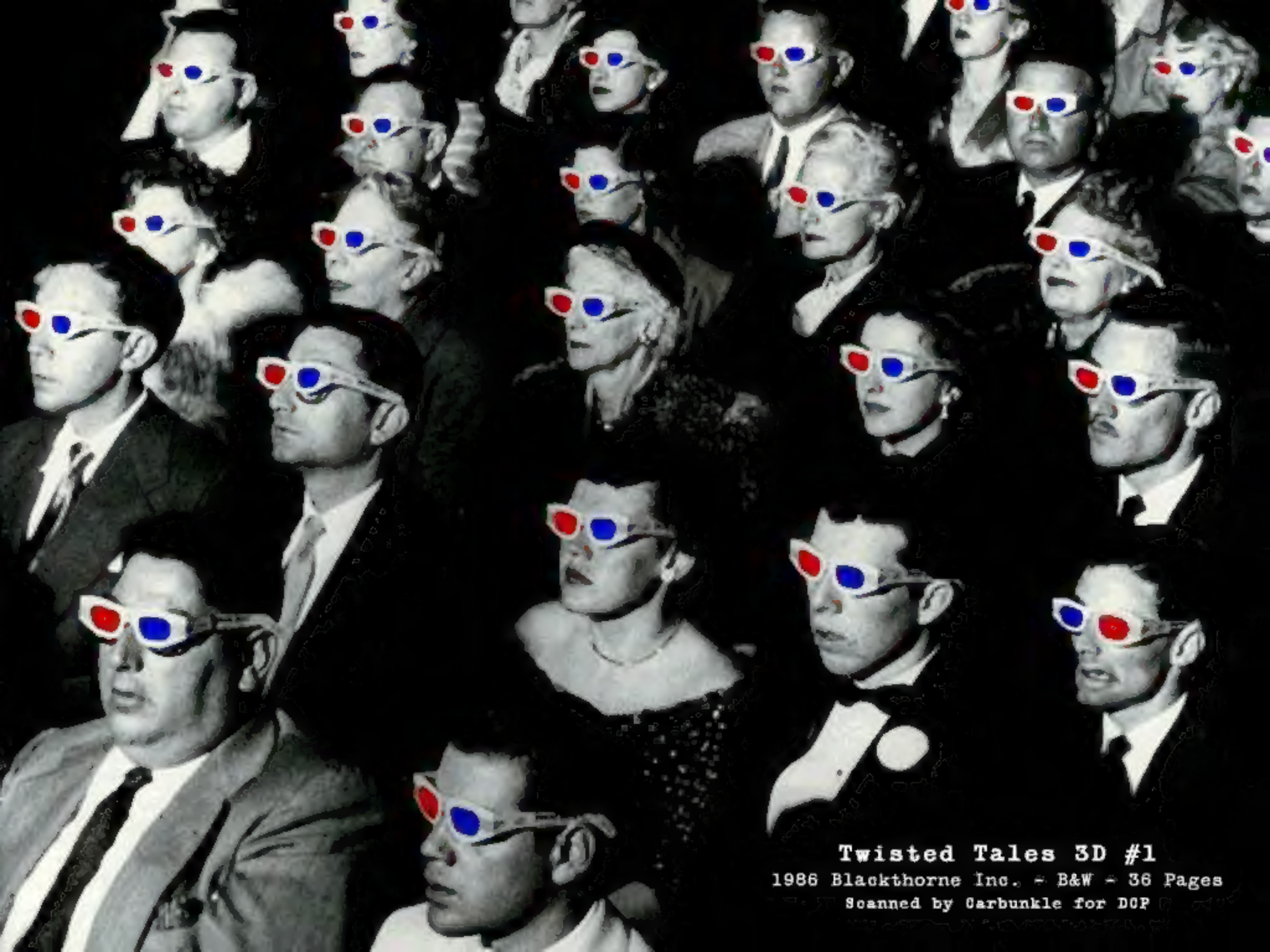
☐ **PRINCE VALIANT, Book 2** John Cullen Murphy illustrates the further adventures of the Prince and his royal family, as the search for Val's youngest son continues. Stunning art!

☐ **STREET WOLF #2 of 3** Our 3 issue mini-series for mature readers. Nathan Blackhorse encounters the crazed knife-wielding maniac Ed Graves, illegal drugs & murder.

☐ **Jerry Iger's GOLDEN FEATURES #4** This issue features "Spies in Action," with page after page of gems from the Iger Shop (1940's). Art by Lou Fine and early Jack Kirby!

☐ **COLD-BLOODED CHAMIELEON COMMANDOS #1** The newest line in government defense! Join the commandos on their first mission at a remote jungle fortress.

SICK



Twisted Tales 3D #1

1986 Blackthorne Inc. - B&W - 36 Pages

Scanned by Carbunkle for DCP